Half a Chance

By FREDERIC S. ISHAM.

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(Continued.)

leal. Lord Rousdate sprang to his feet. John Steele looked at him, at the wayering face, the uncertain eyes. doubt existed now in his mind. Gillett had not secured the paper or he would have given it to his patron when they were nione. That fact was patent. The document was gone irretrievably There could be no hope of recovering. it. The bitter knowledge that it had really once existed would not serve John Steele long. But with sceming resolution he went on: "I had the story from his own lips." deliberately, "put in the form of an affidavit, duly signed and witnessed."

"This is a subterfuge."

"It is true." "Where-is the paper? You did not have it at Strathorn. If you had you would have taken advantage of it." John Steele looked at the drawer The affidavit was not there, but some

Thing else was. Lord Rousdale sank back into his "You have, out of fancy, constructed a libelous theory, one that you would be laughed at for advanc-A cock and bull story about a paper that doesn't exist, that never ex him to turn sharply. Mr. Gillett came

"I have here a paper that one of our men has just turned over to me," John Steele started, but neither of the others noticed. "He found it at the last place we were. Evidently it had been dropped by the fellow who was there and who fled at our coming." As he spoke he stepped nearer the desk

in his hand a paper. "What is it?" Lord Rousdale de manded testily.

Mr. Gillett did not at once answer. He looked at John Steele. The latter stood like a statue. Only his eyes were turned toward the nobleman, to the thin aristocratic hand yet resting on the edge of the drawer.

"If your lordship will glance at it?" said Mr. Gillett, proffering the sheet.

The nobleman did, so. His face changed. His eyes seemed mable to leave the paper. Suddenly he gave a smothered explanation, tore the sheet once and started up, took a step toward the fire.

"Stop." The voice was John Steele's. He stood now next to the partly opened drawer, in his hand that which had been concealed there—something bright, abining. Lord Rousdaie wheeled, look ed at the weapon and into the eyes be-blud it. "Place those two bits of paper there on the edge of the desk!"

CHAPTER XVI. A CONSISTION.

ORD RONSDALE seemed almost to forget caution-almost, but not quite. Perhaps he was de-terred by the look on John Strele's face scornful, mocking, as if half inviting him to cast all prudence to the winds. This bit of evidence that he had not enleutated upon hard to give it up, but no other course remained. Besides, another-Gillett-knew, of its existence. Lord Rousdale feit he could not depend on that person in an emergency of this kind.

The nobleman moved toward the desk. The paper fluttered from his had again found lodgment in his waistcont pocket.

What John Steele said was for Lord Rousdale alone. After Gillett had gone he laid down a condition. "And if I refuse to let you dictate in

a purely private concern?" Lord Ronsdate, white with passion, had answer-

"The end will be the same for you. As matters stand Sir Charles no doubt thicks still that you would make a desirable parti for his piece. His wife, Lady Wray, unquestionably shares that opinion, Their combined infinence might in time prevail and Joce lyn Wray yield to their cuited wishes This misfortune," with cutting deadi-ness of tone, "it is obvious must be You will consent to withdraw all pretensions in that direction or you will force me to make public this paper. A full exposition of the case I think would materially affect Sir Charles and Lady Wray's attitude as to the desirability of an alliance be-

tween their family and yours."
"And yourself? You forget," with a sneer, "how it would affect you!"
"Myself!" John Steele laughed. "You fool! Do you imagine I would heat-tute for that reason?"

"You love her yourself, and"-John Steele stepped toward htm.
"Stop or— I have once been simost
on the point of killing you tonight.
Don't"— He broke off. "The condition!

You entment or not?"
"And if 1-you would"-

"Keep your cowardly secret? Yes?" Lord liquidate modded his head slowly, indicating that he would cease his attentions to Joselyn Wray. And we he that no a venomena expression engue tata his fore-

A C V a month after that night in Lord Rensdale's rooms Captain Forsythe, entiling on John Steele, found himself admitted to the sitting room. The rooms were partly dismantled, a number of boxes littering the place indicating preparations to move. John Steele came in. His face was paler than it had been thinner like that of a man who had recently suffered some severe lline:s.

A short time passed. They talked on various topics. The military man puffed more quickly. It seemed the from of fate or friendship that now that he was fust beginning to get better acquainted with Steele the latter should inconsistently determine to leave London.

"Anything I can do for you when you're away?" began Captain Forsythe. "Command me if there is. Needn't say"-

"There's only one thing." John Steele looked at him. His voice was steady, quiet. "And we've already spoken about that. You will let me know if Renselate deem't keep to the letter of the condition?"

"Very well." Captain Fersythe's expression changed slightly, but the other did not appear to notice.

"I shall leave with you certified cop-les of all the papers," said Steele in a short, matter of fact tone, "These, to gether with the one you furnished me, are absolutely conclusive." "The one I furnished you!" Captain

Forsythe rested his chin on the knob of his stick. "Odd about that, wasn't it—that the day in the library at Stratborn House, when I was about to tell end time I visited the landlady, we should have been interrupted? And," looking at the other furtively, "by Joselyn Wrny." Steele did not answer. "If I had only seen the drift of your inquiries, had detected more than a mere perfunctory interest! With the confession given me on her deathbed by the landledy that she had testified falsely to protect her good for nothing son and acknowledging that another whom she did not know by name, but whom she described minurely, had entered the house on the fatul night-with this confession in your hands a world of trouble might have been saved. As it is," he ended half ruefully, "you have found me most unlike the proverbial friend in need, who is"-

"A friend indeed," said John Steele, placing a hand on the other's shoulder while a smile somewhat constrained lighted his face for a moment, "who at once rose to the occasion, hastened to London on the receipt of a letter that was surely a test of friendship"-

"Oh, I don't know about that!" "Test of friendship, indeed." quickly. Captain Forsythe looked slightly embarrased beneath the keen searching eyes. "Don't think of it, or- Besides," brightening, "I had to come. Telegram from Miss Wray, don't you know.

"Miss Wray!" Steele's band fell suddenly to his side. He looked with abrupt, swift inquiry at the other. bruid, swift inquiry at the lips. "By Captain Forsythe bit his lips. "By "Was Jove, forgot!" he murmured.

not to say anything about that." "However, as you have"- John Steele regarded him steadily. received a telegram from"—
"At the same time that your letter

intercepted me at Brighton. "Asking you to return to London?"

"Exactly. She-wanted to see me."
"About?" John Steele's eyes asked a question. The other nodded. course. Not difficult to understand. Her desire to hush up the affair. Her fear," with a short laugh, "lest the scandal become known. A guest at Strathorn House had been"— "I don't think it was for"-

snortly. too, had learned-knew"-

"Yes; she made me aware of that at once when she came to see me with Sir Charles. It was she sent your lug-

"Sir Charles? Then be also"-"No. You-you need feel no appresold flagers. When once more John hension on that secre." A peculiar steele buttoned his coat the affidavit expression came into the other's glance. "You see, his niece told him it was not her secret; asked him to help her, to trust her. Never was a man more perplexed, but he kept the word he gave her on leaving for London and forbore to question her. Even when they drove through London in that

"Yes, yes. I know"-

"You? How"-John Steele seemed not to hear. "She mw you that night?"

"She did, alone in the garden of Rosemary Villa. Sir Charles behaved splendidly. 'All right, my dear, Some day you'll tell me, perhaps,' he said to her. 'Meanwhile I'll possess my soul in patience.' So while he smoked in the cab we talked it over."

"Well?" John Steele said shortly, "She suggested my going to Lord

Ronsdale. "To invoke his assistance, perhaps!" Steele once more laughed. "As an old friend;" Captain Forsythe started to speak. The other went on, "Well, we'll keep his secret as long as he keeps his compact."

"I promised. What does it matter? Bir Charles may be disappointed at not being able to bring about- But for her sake that is the main considera-

"And you, the question of your tune-cence to her?" Forsythe looked at him narrowty, smiled elightly to blue

"In Incensequential! The main point in the Prisco Pet is dond tillett won't speak You won't Lord Holds date can't Amother to whom I am about to tell the story with I am sure

John Steele smiled. "Can you think of no one to whom I am bound to tell the truth, the whole truth? Who ex tended me his hand in friendship, invited me to his home? Of course it would be easier to go without spenking. It is eather difficult to own that one has accepted a man's hospitality. stepped beneath his roof and sat at his board as not to mince words an im-postor. I could have delegated youto tell him all but that wouldn't do It is probably a part of the old, old debt, but I must meet him face to face So I have sent for"-

A bell rang. A servant opened the foor of the library. Sir Charles Wray

Below, in the can Josefyn waited Her pale face expressed restlessness. She held in her hand a bit of crummled paper. It was John Steele's note to Sir Charles asking him to call, stating nothing beyond a mere perfuncfory request to that end, giving no renson for his wish to see him.

"Can you drop in at my chambers for a few minutes?" John Strele had written. "A few minutes." The blue eyes shone with impatience. He was leaving London, Captain Forsythe bad informed her, and, she concluded, he wanted to see her uncle before he left. But not her; no. She had driven there, however, with Sir Charles on some light pretext-for want of some thing better to do-to be out in the

"I'll wait here in the cab," she bad said to her uncle when he had left it before John Steele's dwelling. least," meeting the puzzled gaze that had rested on her more than once lately, "I may or may not wait. If I get tired, if when you come beek you don't find me, just conclude," capriclously, "I have gone on some little errand of my own-shopping, perhaps. She recalled these words now, found it intolerable to sit still. Abruptly she rose and stepped from the cab.

She half started to move away, ooked toward the house. Brass plates variously disposed around the en trance and appearing nearly all alike as to form and size stared at her. One metal sign a shock headed lad was removing—"John Steele." She read the plain, modest letters, the in scription "Barrister" beneath. She caught her breath slightly. "Uncle is certainly very long." she

epeated mechanically, "Why don't you go in and see wot's detaining of him?" vouchsafed the cabby in amicable fashion as he re

garded the hesitating, slender figure. "Third floor to the right, miss," said the boy, occupied in removing the sign and stepping aside as he spoke to alow her to pass, "if it's Mr. Steele's office you're looking for. You'll see Barrister in brass letters, as I said to the old centleman. I haven't got at them yet-to take them down, I mean.

"Thank you." she said irresolutely and without intending to enter found berself within the ball. There a barrow stairway lay before her. He pointed to it, with an excess of juveolle solicitude and politeness, boy bood's involuntary tribute to youth nd beauty in need of assistance. He teld her to go on "straight up."

And she did unreasoningly, mechancally-one flight, two flights! Near his door! About to turn, to re-

trace her steps, an Hogical sequence to the illogical action that had preceded it, she was held to the spot by the door suddenly opening. A man-a servant, broom in band-who had evilently been engaged in cleaning one of the chambers within was stepping

"You wished to see Mr. Steele?" The proud head nodded affirmative-

ly to the inquiry,
"Well, you can be stepping into the library, miss," said the man. "Mr. Steele is engaged just now."

Jocelyn on the instant found no reason for refusing. The door closed behind her, and she looked around. She stood in a library alone. Beyond, in another chamber, she heard voicesber uncle's, John Steele's.

> CHAPTER XVII. PAST AND PRESENT.

★HOSE boxes contained books -yours, Sir Charles," were the first words the girl caught. "Mine! Bless my soul!" her uncle's surprised voice broke in, "You don't mean to tell me that all those volumes I had boxed for Australia and which I thought lost on the Lord Nelson came asbore on your littie cornt iste?"

Came ashore on his coral isie! The girl caught at the words. Of course he had been saved-be who had saved her from the wild sea. She had realized that after their last meeting at Strathorn House, But how?
"Exactly?" said John Steele succinct-

"Bless my soul?" Sir Charles' amazed voice could only repeat. "I remember most of those books well-a brave array-poets, philosophers, lawnakers! Then that accounts for your- it is

ilke a fairy tate."
"A fairy tale." Joselyn Wray gazed around her at books, books on every side. She regarded the door leading out, was half mindful to go, but heard the manservant in the hall and lin-

"Nothing so pleasant. I assure you." John Sterie answered Sir Charles shortly Toon, with a few words, he auswered Sir Charles painted a picture uncompromisingly The girl strank back. Perhaps she wished she had not come. Tids, truly, was no fairy tule, but a wild, savage drama, personal, the picture of a soul buttling with itself on the little, tomograms. Find the sounds over the lost sungry wind. Rest Ma soundship rays, hear the bias And of the water. All the man's

drength for good, for 51, went into the story. The isle became as the pit tress

of Acheron. "When the man woke," he had said, "he cursed the sen for bringing him, as be thought, nothing. One desire for mented him it became intolerable, Day after day he went down to the ocean, but the surf only looped in derision. For the thousandth tinle be cursed it, the late to which he was bound. Weeks passed, until. mad through the upnotony of the long hours, one day he inadvertently pick-ed up a book. The brute convlet could just read. Where, how he ever learned. I forget. He began to pick out the

words. After that"-Through the bong months, the long years, the man had fought for knowledge as he had always fought for any thing-with all his strength, passion, ebergy:

"Incredible: By Jove!" She heard Bir Charles' voice, awed and admiring "I am glad to have had your confdence and and tell me, how did you happen to light on the law for special study and preparation?"

"You forget that about half your superb library was law books, Sir. Charles. A most comprehensive col-

"The law-the ramifications it ereates for the many, the attendant restraints for the individual-1 confess interested me. You can imagine a per-sonal reason or—an abstract one. From the lonely perspective of a tiny corni isle, a system or systems-codes of conduct or morals built up for the swarming millions, so to speak-could not but possess fascination for one to whom those millions had become only as the faraway shadows of a dream."

"As a boy!" John Steele repeated the rords almost mechanically. "My parwords almost mechanically. ents died when I was a child. They came of good stock-New England. He uttered the last part of the sentence involuntarily-stopped. "I was bound out, was beaten. I fought, ran away. In lumber camps, the drunken riffraff cursed the new scrub boy, on the Mississippi the sailors and stevedores kicked him because the mate kicked them. Everywhere it was the same. The boy learned only one thing to fight. Fight or be beaten!

"In a wordly sense I prospered after I was rescued-in New Zealand, in Tasmania. Fate, as if to atone for baying delayed her favors, now lavished them freely. Work became easy. A mine or two that I was lucky enough to locate yielded and continue to yield unexpected returns."

"And then, having fairly, through your own efforts, won a place in the world, having conquered fortune, why did you return to England knowing the risk that some one of these fel-lows like Gillett, the police agent; might"-

"Why," said John Steele, "because I wished to sift, to get to the very bottom of, this crime for which I was convicted. For all real wrongdoing. resisting officers of the law, offenses against officialdom, I had paid the penalty in full, I shelleve. But this other matter-that was different. It weighed on me through those years on the island and afterward. A jury bad convicted me wrongfully. But I had to prove it, to satisfy myself, to find out beyond any shadow of a

doubt, and""He did." For the first time Captain Forsythe spoke, "Steele has in his possession full proofs of his innocence, and I have seen them. They go to show that he suffered through the cowardice of a miserable cod, a titled scoundrel who struck his hand from the gunwale of the boat when the Lord Nelson went down. Yes, you told that story in your fevered ramblings, Steele."

"Forsythe"-the other's voice rang out warningly-"didn't I tell you the part he played was to be forgotten ur

"All right; have your way," grudg-

ingly "A titled scoundrel! There was only one person of rank on the Lord Nelson besides myself, and - Forsythe"-the old nobleman's voice called out sharply-"you have said too much or too lit-tie,"

John Steele made a gesture. "I have

given my word not to' "But I haven't!" said Captain Forsythe. "The confession I procured and what I subsequently learned led me directly to- Here is the tale, Sir

It was over at last. They were cone Sir Churles and Captain Forsythe. Their hand clasps still lingered in his For a few moments now John Steele remained motionless, listening to their

departing footsteps, then turned and gazed around him. Never had his rooms appeared more cheerless, more barren, more empty No; not empty. They were filled with memories. The man squared his shoulders and looked out again from the window toward that small bit of the river he could just discern. Once he had gazed at it when its song seemed to be of the green banks and flowers It had passed by, but that had been on a fairer occasion-at the close of a joy-ous spring day. How it came back to

him, the solemn court of justice, the beautiful face, an open doorway, with the sunshine golden without and a figure that, ere passing into it, had turned to look back! It was but for an instant, yet again his gaze seemed to leap to that luring light, the ing gleam of her eyes, that had lin-

That he saw now, or was it a dream? At the threshold near by some one tooked our some one as fair-fairer, if that could be whose cheeks worn the that of the wild more "Pardon me. I came up to see if

He stared at log-"Yes," Blor reload a smell gloved hand and swept back a disordered

"Your-your uncle has just gone."

"I know"
"You do?" "I was in the library when they went out I had come up to seewas with my uncle in the cab and

wondered why he"-She stopped. He took a quick step toward her "You were in there that

"Yes," she said and threw back her head as if to contradlet a sudden mistle ness that seemed stupidly sweeping over her gaze. "Why did you not tell me-you did not-that you were inno-cent?"

"You were in there?" He did not seem to catch her words. "Heardbeard"-A moment they stood looking at each

Suddenly she reached out her hands to him. With a quick exclamation be caught and held them Bur in a moment be let them fall. What had he been about to say, to do, with the fair face, the golden head, so near? He stepped back quickly.

Markness! "You are going away?" She was the first to speak. Her voice was in the least uncertain.

"Tomorrow"-without looking at her -"to America." "It is very large." frelevantly. re-nember-of course, you are American, 1-I have hardly realized We-we Australians are not so unlike you. But your friends bere?" Her lips half veiled a tremulous little

"My friends!" Something flashed in his voice-went, leaving him very quiet, I am afraid I have not made many while in London." Her eyes lifted slightly, fell. "Call it the homing instinct!" he went on with a laugh, "The desire once more to become part and parcel of one's native land to be come a factor, however small, in its activities."

"I don't think you-will be-a small factor," said the girl in a low tone. She stole a glance at his face. He was looking down. The silence lengthened. He waited. She seemed to find nothing else to say. He, too, did not speak, She found berself walking toward the door.

"Goodby." He spoke in a low voice, As I told Captain Forsythe, you-you need not feel concern about the story ever coming out"-

"Concern? What do you mean?" "Your telegram to Captain Porsythe, he fear that brought you to Lon

"The-you thought that?" swiftly, The indignation in her eyes met the

urprise in his. "Thank you," she said— "thank you for that estimate of me"
"Miss Wray!" Contrition, doubt, "Goodby," she said coldly,

And suddenly, as one sees through rift in the clouds the clear light, he inderstood.
"You will go with me? You!"

"Why, as for that"-Fierce of gold! Heaven of blue even! they were so near!

'And if I did you who misinterpret motives would think"-"I'hat I came here to"-

"I should like to think that."

"Well, I came," said the girl, "I don't know why Unless the boy who was taking down the signs had something to do with it."

"He said to go 'straight up." she inughed.

He taughed, too; all the world seemed laughing. He hardly knew what ie sold how she answered only the she was there, slender, beautiful as the springtime full of flowers; that a mirasts had happened, was happening. The mottled biar in the sky had e a spot of brightness; sunshine filled the room; in a cage above a tins feathered creature began to chirp.

"And Sir Charles? Lady Wray?" He pole quietly, but with wild pulsing of temples, exultant flerce throbbing of heart. He held her from all the wur'd

"Ther?" She was silent a moment. then tooked up within fourth of her old bright importanteness. "My un te toves me, has never dented me anything, and will not in this that is, if I ten tiins"

"What a" the bor this answer or was it only tiet willing eyes that he bid as not the conglet ?

After the title bird, with a sed spo the recent limit its headlike eves on the first next or war married. the course of adjusting the the of the north or orange, that has six He til the street subgrow water to hell the

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